

The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art Presents A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950 and Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940

News Release

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Complementary exhibitions showcase urban life in New York City in the early 20th century

Cleveland (July 12, 2021)—A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950 and Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940 open in July at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA). The exhibitions explore urban life in New York City during the first half of the 20th century through street photography and urban realism in printmaking. Both movements focused on depictions of the everyday activities of urban dwellers to illustrate the demographic, social and economic shifts transforming the city. **A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950** is on view now through November 7, 2021, in the Mark Schwartz and Bettina Katz Photography Gallery. **Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940** is on view from July 17 through December 26, 2021, in the James and Hanna Bartlett Prints and Drawings Gallery.

“Through street photography and printmaking, the complementary exhibitions feature works that document the changes happening in New York City in the early 20th century,” said William M. Griswold, director of the CMA. “They give visitors an inside look at the gritty everyday scenes of the city, focusing on candid interactions between the diverse urban residents and the spaces they inhabited.”

The practice of urban realism in printmaking and painting started in the 1910s. It led the way for photographers to begin addressing similar subject matter the following decade. In 1920, for the first time, more Americans lived in urban than rural areas. New York, the country’s largest city, attracted people from small towns, including Black Americans moving up from the South in the Great Migration, and immigrants from Europe, Puerto Rico and Latin American countries. Crowded into tiny apartments, poorer residents turned stoops and sidewalks into living rooms where both mundane moments and private dramas were on public display. Also on view were new forms of visual culture ranging from placards, billboards and painted storefronts to newsstands stocked with illustrated magazines.

Featuring photographs drawn entirely from the museum's permanent collection, with more than 15 on view for the first time, ***A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950*** presents work by photographers who took spontaneous pictures in public places, often without their subjects' knowledge. Images by members of the Photo League, which included Walter Rosenblum, Lisette Model, Leon Levinstein and Louis Stettner, highlight the amusements and struggles of the common man and woman. Walker Evans and Helen Levitt were astute observers of the daily behaviors of city dwellers. Photographers such as James Van Der Zee, Roy DeCarava and Ralph Steiner collaborated with their subjects to produce enduring portraits. Whether created on assignment, as a personal expression or to advocate for societal change, the photos on display allow viewers to experience life in New York City almost a century ago.

Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940 showcases prints of city life made by a group of urban realists that formed around 1900 called the Ashcan School. Located in New York City, these artists rejected academic artistic traditions and instead focused on the everyday life of the city.

Composed of prints from the museum's holdings and those of a local private collection, the exhibition features etchings and lithographs by well-known American artists—such as John Sloan and George Bellows—whose paintings in the CMA's permanent collection galleries are frequented by visitors, affording a rare opportunity to engage with works on paper not normally on view. Both Sloan and Bellows captured private moments in New York City's parks, streets, subways, bars, beaches and amusement parks, largely overlooking tensions in favor of positive interpretations of city life. By the 1920s and through the Great Depression, a new generation of urban realists including Edward Hopper, Isabel Bishop and Benton Spruance took a more reflective approach to the social isolation and increasing economic stratification they observed in the American city. Others, such as Reginald Marsh, celebrated the visual delights that the city offered to all races, classes and creeds.

Please [view the press kit](#) for images and more information about ***A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950*** and ***Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940***.

Principal support for ***Ashcan School Prints and the American City, 1900–1940*** is provided by the Print Club of Cleveland.

A New York Minute: Street Photography, 1920–1950 was supported in part by the Ohio Arts Council, which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is funded in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

All exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Exhibitions. Major annual support is provided by Bill and Joyce Litzler, with generous annual funding from Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Chapman Jr., the Jeffery Wallace Ellis Trust in memory of Lloyd H. Ellis Jr., Janice Hammond and Edward Hemmelgarn, Ms. Arlene Monroe Holden, Eva and Rudolf Linnebach, William S. and Margaret F. Lipscomb, Tim O'Brien and Breck Platner, the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Claudia Woods and David Osage.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [2].

Press Announcements [3]

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